CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1513
26 May 1998

Original: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 25 MAY 1998 ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAKISTAN TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF THE STATEMENT MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD IN ISLAMABAD ON 23 MAY 1998 REGARDING THE SITUATION ARISING FROM INDIA'S NUCLEAR TESTS

The Prime Minister of Pakistan addressed a Press Conference in Islamabad on 23 May 1998 regarding the situation arising from India's nuclear tests. I have the honour to transmit to you the text of the Prime Minister's statement at the Press Conference.

I shall be grateful if this statement is circulated as an official document of the Conference.

(Signed) Munir Akram
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

GE.98-61790

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Prime Minister's statement at Press Conference on 23 May 1998

I extend to you a warm welcome and that is inspite of the heat of the season as well as of May 11. Since that day the world around us has suddenly undergone a qualitative change. We have to contend with new realities, heightened dangers and an imminent threat to our security.

Since May 11, we are living under the dark shadow of Indian nuclear sabre-rattling. The fundamentalist Indian leadership, bared its teeth even before the dust settled at Pokhran. The Indian leaders could not contain themselves a minute longer. Immediately they raised the demand that "Islamabad should realize the change in the geo-strategic situation in the region". The open message was that Pakistan should abandon its principled policy to support the indigenous struggle of the people of Kashmir for their right of self-determination promised to them by India itself and the world community through the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

You would recall that I had a initiated dialogue with India with a view to resolving all the issues through peaceful means. The Indians have spurned the peace initiative and answered with atomic tests across our border and gone to the extent of threatening to use nuclear weapons. Statements emanating from Indian leaders virtually amount to a nuclear blackmail by India to impose a military solution in Kashmir. Overt Indian nuclear weaponization has seriously upset the strategic balance in the region and emboldened India to make a naked assertion of her hostile intentions towards Pakistan.

We are not surprised at the actualization of the Indian hegemonic agenda just as we were not surprised at the conduct of Indian tests. India has repeatedly committed aggression against us.

The Indian missiles and nuclear programme has never been a secret. For their own reasons and inspite of their full awareness of its vast range and sophistication the Western world has never before expressed any concern at the Indian nuclear programme. The BJP's national agenda clearly spoke of the nuclear option and the induction of nuclear weapons. We could see the writing on the wall. I immediately wrote letters to the leaders of major powers warning them of the impending danger. They chose to disregard our advice. How should we now understand or interpret their indignation at the Indian nuclear test? Have they offered any explanation to the world of their own indifference to the Indian nuclear programme and its culmination in tests ranging from low-yield to the thermo-nuclear?

We are being asked to show restraint. Have we not always shown utmost restraint for all those years since we have had the nuclear capability. Our record and commitment to non-proliferation has been impeccable. What did we earn in exchange for the restraint? Discriminatory and punitive measures were imposed on us. In a manifestly unjust and unfair approach Pakistan was penalised for every Indian escalatory step on the nuclear and ballistic ladder. The talk of sanctions is not only familiar to us but it also does not rattle us. We have learnt to live with these punitive measures.

Our legitimate need for security is still being ignored. This fills us with apprehensions even now. We have made clear to all our friends and well-wishers that we are not seeking any bargains. Can the Pakistani nation ever barter its independence, security and sovereignty? What is the price for liberty and freedom, dignity and honour?

Indian defiance on the other hand has even now attracted some sanctions but more understanding. Some have even offered endorsement.

No amount of condemnation or sanctions have changed the

immediacy or magnitude of the threat to us. Practically sanctions mean little and change nothing. The reality on the ground remains.

Pakistan has to contend with that reality and its dark shadow on our security. We have to contend with the Indian threats which may materialize any time. The Indian record of aggression and irresponsible behaviour is a stark reality for Pakistan. Our compulsions are not hidden. The balance of power in the region has been violently tilted. Under these circumstances our undivided focus must be on the preservation of our national security interests.

In this critical hour we are much encouraged by the steadfastness and the moral support of our friend China which is a peace-loving country and the only nuclear power which has promised not to use nuclear weapons, under any circumstances, against a non-nuclear weapon state. We are also heartened by expressions of support and solidarity by the Islamic world.

I am particularly grateful to President Clinton for his three telephone calls during which he conveyed his strong appreciation and understanding for the threat to Pakistan's security that has arisen as a result of the Indian nuclear tests. I also appreciate the concern shown by the other world leaders during their telephonic conversations with me.

Apart from threatening Pakistan, India is now blackmailing the world by offers of bargain on the CTBT. We believe that Indian actions have rendered the non-proliferation regime and instruments such as NPT and CTBT irrelevant. The Indian tests have posed now challenges and dilemmas in the field of non-proliferation. Fresh thinking is now needed on these issues.

Pakistan is a democratic country. The aspirations of the people of Pakistan provide the guiding path and determine our actions. Our nation has risen to the occasion. There is

complete national consensus to respond to the challenges and the threat. This nation has a history of facing challenges and has never submitted to threats. Any misadventure will meet a resolute response. The whole nation has demonstrated a sober and mature approach to this complicated situation. We have not taken any action in haste. We have not behaved in a tit-for-tat manner. We have not let any madness engulf us. Whatever decision we will eventually take, it will be in our supreme national interest.